

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
MELISSA MONESTIME-FRAZIER : ORDER OF SUSPENSION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2425-312

At its meeting of August 8, 2025, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information from the Department of Education (DOE) – Office of Legal Affairs, Accountability & Compliance (OLAAC), and DOE – Office of Student Protection (OSP) regarding Melissa Monestime-Frazier, including documents received from the Union County Prosecutor’s Office (UCPO) and the Department of Child Protection & Permanency (DCP&P) – Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU). Monestime-Frazier currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), issued May 2014; a Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, issued May 2014; a Standard Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 certificate, issued May 2015; a Standard Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate, issued May 2015; a Teacher of Supplemental Instruction in Reading and Mathematics: Grades K-8 certificate, issued December 2018; and a Standard Teacher of Psychology certificate, issued December 2018.

On or about April 17, 2023, Monestime-Frazier was charged with two counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child – Abuse/Neglect by a Caretake (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4A(2)*. It was alleged that she was operating her vehicle under the influence of alcohol and/or narcotics with her children in the back seat.

On April 9, 2025, Monestime-Frazier received an Order of Postponement and was entered into the Pre-Trial Intervention probation program (PTI) for a period of twelve (12) months. She was ordered to complete 60 hours of community service, submit to mandatory drug testing, maintain full-time employment, comply with outpatient treatment, enroll in and successfully

complete a parenting course, comply with all DCP&P recommendations, and submit to a hair follicle test at 6 months and 12 months of entering PTI, as well as pay fees and penalties. She was also ordered to plead guilty to fourth degree cruelty and neglect, *N.J.S.A.* 9:6-3, for an alternate sentence of non-custodial probation should she be unsuccessfully terminated from PTI. Further, she was ordered to plead guilty to the motor vehicle summon of Operating Under the Influence of Liquor or Drugs, *N.J.S.A.* 39:4-50, and submit to a two-year license suspension.

IAIU conducted an investigation into the above allegations. On April 19, 2023, IAIU issued its report finding that the allegation of substance abuse of caregiver threatens children was Established as to minors J.M. and K.F. against their biological mother, Monestime-Frazier.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of September 19, 2025, to issue Monestime-Frazier an Order to Show Cause as to why the certificates she holds should not be revoked. The Board sent Monestime-Frazier the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on September 23, 2025. The Order provided Monestime-Frazier had 30 days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(b). On October 21, 2025, and December 15, 2025, Monestime-Frazier submitted responses to the Order to Show Cause, as well as a mitigation statement and letter. *See Answer.*

In her Answer, Monestime-Frazier admitted she was charged with two counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child – Abuse/Neglect by a Caretaker (2nd degree), *N.J.S.A.* 2C:24-4A(2). *Id.* at p.1. She also admitted that she was operating her vehicle under the influence of alcohol and/or narcotics with her children present in the vehicle and acknowledged that it was “a serious lapse in judgment and one of the greatest regrets of her life.” *Ibid.* She stated that at the time she was dealing with serious family issues and “allowed [her] stress and emotions to interfere with health coping and judgment.” *Id.* at 2-3. She claimed she has “taken proactive steps to address the root causes of this behavior and ha[s] fully engaged in rehabilitation, treatment, and ongoing counseling to ensure this mistake is never repeated.” *Id.* at 1. She also claims that she

has “fully completed all court-ordered and DCPD-directed requirements, demonstrating accountability, insight, and rehabilitation.” *Ibid.* Lastly, she stated that she has served as a special education teacher for 18 years and claims that her “professional record prior to this incident has been exemplary, reflecting dedication, compassion, and leadership in education.” *Id.* 2.

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), the Board sent Monestime-Frazier a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on March 5, 2026. The notice explained that there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Monestime-Frazier was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause constituted conduct unbecoming a certificate holder, as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board found just cause to take action against her certificates. Monestime-Frazier was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue.

On April 2, 2026, Monestime-Frazier submitted a written response and supporting documentation. *See Written Submission.* Specifically, she provided copies of proof of completion of the 48-hour Intoxicated Driver Resource Center (IDRC) class and the parent education and family stabilization course; a copy of a July 23, 2023 letter from Department of Child Protection and Permanency; and two drug and alcohol screening results. She also requested to appear before the Board.

In her response, Monestime-Frazier “acknowledge[d] the seriousness of the incident and accept[ed] full responsibility.” *Id.* at 1. She claimed this was an isolated incident during a period of personal difficulty. *Ibid.* She also claimed that she has “demonstrated genuine reform through treatment, counseling, and continued compliance” and requested the Board “allow her to retain her certification.” *Ibid.* Specifically, Monestime-Frazier claimed that she successfully completed the 48-hour IDRC program, 60 hours of community service, inpatient and outpatient treatment, parenting class, hair follicle testing, DCP&P compliance, and ongoing counseling and medication

management. *Id.* at 2. Further, she claimed she “has dedicated 18 years to education, particularly in special education” and has “maintained a positive record and contributed meaningfully to student development and family support systems.” *Ibid.* Monestime-Frazier argues “revocation is not warranted given her extensive rehabilitation, full compliance with all court and PTI requirements, and longstanding professional record.” *Id.* at 1.

On May 19, 2026, Monestime-Frazier provided a copy of the Order of Dismissal following successful completion of PTI. On June 25, 2026, Monestime-Frazier appeared before the Board and provided testimony.

The Board has the authority to “issue appropriate certificates to teach or to administer” and “may revoke the same under rules and regulations prescribed by the State board.” *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38; *see also N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-3.2 and -4.4; *Morison v. Willingboro Bd. of Educ.*, 478 N.J. Super. 229 (App. Div. 2024), *cert. denied* 258 N.J. 143 (July 11, 2024). The Board may take action against a certificate holder on the basis of “demonstrated inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher, or other just cause.” *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.4; *see also Morison*, 478 N.J. Super. at 246, 248 (explaining the Board is responsible for protecting schoolchildren from improper teacher conduct and may suspend or revoke an educator’s continued ability to serve as a teacher at any public school based on unbecoming conduct).

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Monestime-Frazier’s actions here constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Monestime-Frazier did not dispute the allegations in the Order to Show Cause. Because the allegations were not disputed, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Monestime-Frazier’s offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Monestime-Frazier’s conduct were in dispute, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(h).

The Board finds that Monestime-Frazier engaged in conduct unbecoming of an educator. Unbecoming conduct is defined as “conduct ‘which adversely affects the morale or efficiency of

the [department]' or 'has a tendency to destroy public respect for [government] employees and confidence in the operation of [public] services.'" *Bound Brook Bd. of Educ. v. Ciripompa*, 228 N.J. 4, 13 (2017) (quoting *In re Young*, 202 N.J. 50, 66 (2010) (citing *Karins v. Atl. City*, 152 N.J. 532, 554 (1998))). "[A] finding of unbecoming conduct 'need not be predicated upon the violation of any particular rule or regulation, but may be based merely upon the violation of the implicit standard of good behavior which devolves upon one who stands in the public eye as an upholder of that which is morally and legal correct.'" *Id.* at 13-14 (quoting *Karins*, 152 N.J. at 555). "It focuses on the morale, efficiency, and public perception of an entity, and how those concerns are harmed by allowing teachers to behave inappropriately while holding public employment." *Id.* at 14. "The touchstone of the determination lies in the certificate holder's 'fitness to discharge the duties and functions of one's office or position.'" *Young*, 202 N.J. at 66 (quoting *In re Grossman*, 127 N.J. Super. 13, 29 (App. Div. 1974)).

Here, the Board finds that driving under the influence of alcohol and/or narcotics with children in the back seat is a violation of the implicit standard of good behavior expected of public-school teachers and has the tendency to destroy public respect for teachers and confidence in the public school system. Thus, the Board finds that Monestime-Frazier engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board's finding.

Having found that Monestime-Frazier engaged in unbecoming conduct, the Board must now determine the appropriate penalty to be applied. In doing so, the Board considers the "nature and gravity of the offenses under all the circumstances involved, any evidence as to provocation, extenuation or aggravation," and any "harm or injurious effect" on the maintenance of discipline and the proper administration of the school system. *In re Fulcomer*, 93 N.J. Super. 404, 422 (App. Div. 1967). Central to this evaluation is the understanding that "[t]eachers... are professional employees to whom the people have entrusted the care and custody of ... school children. This heavy duty requires a degree of self-restraint and controlled behavior rarely requisite to other

types of employment.” *Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 *S.L.D.* 302, 321. Fitness to teach depends on a broad range of factors, including the teacher’s impact and effect upon the students, because a “teacher works in a sensitive area in a schoolroom” and “shapes the attitude of young minds toward the society in which they live.” *Grossman*, 127 N.J. at 30 (quoting *Adler v. Bd. of Educ. of City of New York*, 342 U.S. 485 (1952)). Importantly, unfitness to hold a position in a school system may be shown by one incident if sufficiently flagrant. *Fulcomer*, 93 N.J. Super. at 421; *Redcay v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 130 N.J.L. 369, 371 (1943), *aff’d*, 131 N.J.L. 326 (E & A 1944).

Consequently, at its meeting of August 7, 2026, the Board considered the allegations in the September 19, 2025 Order to Show Cause, the information received from the OSP, OLAAC, IAIU and UCPO, Monestime-Frazier’s Answer and written submission, along with her supporting documentation. In this instance, the Board concludes that the appropriate response to Monestime-Frazier’s breach in conduct of an educator is a suspension of her certificates. Monestime-Frazier was forthcoming and admitted she drove while intoxicated with children in her vehicle, which is a serious offence. However, based on the information and evidence she provided in her Answer and Written Submission, attached documentation and subsequent documentation, the Board finds that a revocation of her certificates is not warranted.

Specifically, Monestime-Frazier demonstrated that she successfully completed her PTI, including the completion of the IDRC class and other conditions, resulting in the criminal charges being dismissed. Further, she demonstrated mitigation evidence of remorse for her actions, and that she has taken specific steps to ensure her conduct is not repeated, including seeking further medical care. For these reasons, the Board finds that a one-year suspension of Monestime-Frazier’s certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on August 7, 2026, the Board voted to suspend Monestime-Frazier’s certificates for one year. On this 18th day of September 2026, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Melissa Monestime-Frazier’s Teacher of

Elementary School in Grades K-6 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), Teacher of Students with Disabilities CEAS, Standard Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 certificate, Standard Teacher of Students with Disabilities certificate, Teacher of Supplemental Instruction in Reading and Mathematics: Grades K-8 certificate, and Standard Teacher of Psychology certificate are hereby SUSPENDED for a period of one year, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Monestime-Frazier return her paper certificates, if issued, to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Certification and Induction, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.



Kimberly A. Gatti, Acting Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing:

By Certified and Regular mail

Appeals may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to the provisions of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38.4 and *N.J.A.C.* 6A:4-1.3.